



National Association of Social Workers ~ California Chapter

Eligibility and Preparation for California LCSW Exams

The goal of this document is to provide California LCSW exam candidates with information regarding exam eligibility and preparation.

BBS (Licensing Body) vs. NASW

The California Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) is the licensing and regulatory body for ASWs and LCSWs and enforces regulations and statutes pertaining to LCSW license requirements. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest social work professional association in the U.S. and provides advocacy, education, and services to members. NASW-CA provides BBS approved coursework and resources related to licensing at: <http://www.naswca.org/?page=151>.

Eligibility to Sit for California Law and Ethics Exam

All exam candidates must first submit an application to the BBS to be deemed eligible before they can schedule a date to sit for the Law and Ethics Exam through PSI, who administers the exam.

- **BBS Exam News** (recent information regarding exams)
http://www.bbs.ca.gov/exams/exam_news.shtml
- **BBS Video:** A Registrant's Guide to the BBS Examination Restructure
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hf4I7ZzedA8&feature=youtu.be>
- **BBS Form:** Registrant Request for Initial California Law and Ethics Examination
http://www.bbs.ca.gov/pdf/forms/registrant_initial_law-ethic_exam_request.pdf

Reminder to Renewing Associates: ASW registrations expiring on or after 07-01-2016 cannot be renewed until the registrant has taken the California Law and Ethics Exam (www.bbs.ca.gov).

California Law and Ethics Exam Preparation

Within the first year of registering as an ASW, and before their first renewal, ASWs must sit for the California Law and Ethics Exam. Candidates must sit for this exam at least once per year until receiving a passing score. Candidates must pass the California Law and Ethics Exam before they can apply to the BBS to be approved (deemed eligible) to sit for the ASWB Clinical Level Exam. The ASWB schedules and administers this exam, as well as offering an exam handbook, materials, and practice tests.

1. California Law and Ethics Exam Structure and Content

The California Law and Ethics Exam evaluates the candidate's knowledge of and ability to apply legal and ethical standards relating to clinical practice. The computerized exam consists of 75 multiple-choice items administered over a 90 minute period. The re-exam waiting period is 90 days and candidates who fail the exam must obtain 12 hours of additional law and ethics coursework before re-applying to the BBS to retake the exam. Candidates need to carefully review both of the following BBS documents:

- BBS Law and Ethics Examination Plan
http://bbs.ca.gov/pdf/publications/lcsw_2016-law-ethics_exam_plan.pdf
- BBS Law and Ethics Examination Handbook

http://www.bbs.ca.gov/pdf/publications/lcle_handbook_01042016.pdf

- Exam Related Forms and Publications:
http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml#exam_related

2. Recommendations for Preparing for Exams

In addition to thoroughly reading information found in the BBS Exam Plan and Exam Handbook, candidates need to perform a personal assessment of their knowledge of the following legal and ethical topics: advertising; scope of practice; scope of competence; treatment of minors; confidentiality; dangerous patients; psychotherapist-patient privilege; record keeping; patient access to records; state and federal laws regarding confidentiality of patient health information; dual relationships; child abuse; elder and dependent adult abuse; online therapy; insurance reimbursement; civil liability; disciplinary actions; unprofessional conduct; ethics complaints and ethical standards; termination of therapy; standards of care; relevant family law; therapist disclosures to patients; differences in legal and ethical standards in different types of work settings; and licensing law and process.

Once candidates have identified specific topics for further study, they can access law and ethics courses through the NASW-CA Online Program. Candidates can view the course details and outline prior to registering. For details, visit https://www.socialworkweb.com/nasw/#/s/camandatedrenewal_lcsw_mft.

Candidates may also take live courses through the chapter's CE Fairs (Jan, Feb, May, and June) or the Annual Conference (Oct). For a schedule, visit <http://www.naswca.org/?page=163>.

Candidates may also decide to explore exam prep courses, which focus on test taking strategies and include some sample exam questions. Candidates can find "California LCSW Law and Ethics Exam Prep" courses through an Internet search.

Eligibility and Preparation for the ASWB Clinical Level Exam

As of January 1, 2016, California began utilizing the ASWB Clinical Level Exam. A benefit of California adopting the ASWB Clinical Level Exam is that all 49 other states utilize the ASWB Clinical Level Exam for a LCSW license. The following excerpt is from the ASWB website at: <https://www.aswb.org/>.

Each examination contains 170 four-option, multiple-choice questions designed to measure minimum competencies at four categories of practice. Only 150 of the 170 items are scored; the remaining 20 questions are pretest items included to measure their effectiveness as items on future examinations. These pretest items are scattered randomly throughout the examination. Candidates have four hours to complete the test, which is administered electronically.

1. ASWB Exam Tests Candidates Abilities

The ASWB exam tests candidates' abilities to comprehend, apply, evaluate, and synthesize social work knowledge. The following bulleted points provide examples of the types of knowledge tested:

- In a case where several interventions might be appropriate for a specific client, candidates are asked to select which would be the most appropriate intervention.
- In a particular case, when two ethical standards are in conflict, candidates must select which of the two takes precedence.
- When a supervisee claims to take an eclectic approach to practice, candidates are asked which concepts and practice principles are drawn from each theory utilized.

Additionally, the ASWB Exam tests the candidate's abilities as related to the following:

- **Comprehensiveness:** The candidate’s ability to thoroughly consider a range of relevant options. This ability relates to the quality of professional maturity, or the ability to refrain from premature judgments based on insufficient information.
- **Synthesis:** The candidate’s ability to integrate, summarize, and refine clinical information.
- **Prioritize information:** The candidate’s ability to recognize the importance of information, depending on its relationship to other information.
- **Sequence in practice:** The candidate’s ability to understand the sequence and draw clear, explicit relationships between the identification of a presenting problem, assessment findings, diagnostic formulation, treatment plan, intervention strategy, progress evaluation, and termination.

Most questions in the ASWB Clinical Level Exam are written in a format suggesting clinical application, rather than a straightforward question that simply requires one to recall a specific fact. The questions often describe a clinical situation and ask the candidate to select the “best thing to do” in a specific situation, but do not include factual recall questions that require evaluative judgments. Both vignette style questions and single sentence factual questions are used in the ASWB Clinical Level Exam.

2. Preparing for the ASWB Clinical Level Exam

Candidates can access information, applications, and resources using the following links:

- **BBS Exam Related Forms and Publications**
http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml#exam_related
- **ASWB Clinical Level Exam Content Outline**
<https://www.aswb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ClinicalKSAs.pdf>
- **ASWB Examination Candidate Handbook**
<https://www.aswb.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Candidate-Handbook.pdf>
- **ASWB Exam Material**
<https://www.aswb.org/exam-candidates/exam-materials/>
- **ASWB Exam Online Practice Tests**
<https://www.aswb.org/exam-candidates/>
- **ASWB Register for the Exam**
<https://www.aswb.org/exam-candidates/exam-registration/>